



New South Wales Agency for Clinical Innovation - Pain Management Network website: a useful resource for patients and clinicians

Agency for Clinical Innovation Pain Management Network: <http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain>

The Australian National Pain Strategy¹ highlights the problems of chronic pain in Australia. Among others, the key goals of the National Pain Strategy include empowering and supporting people with pain and ensuring that professionals are skilled and utilise best-practice evidence-based care. Furthermore, access to interdisciplinary care at all levels is a priority. As the management of chronic pain is complex and multi-faceted, it requires additional resources to support patient care. With increasing demands on health resources and issues with access to appropriate healthcare, resources such as the Pain Management Network website, designed and compiled by the New South Wales (NSW) Agency for Clinical Innovation (an Australian state government initiative) - Pain Management group, are much needed and welcome, and align well with the National Pain Strategy.

The website is a useful resource for clinicians and people suffering from chronic pain. It is structured into four sections: *For Everyone*, *For Youth: PainBytes* (for younger sufferers), *Spinal Cord Injury Pain* and *Health Professionals*. The latter contains a comprehensive bank of resources for healthcare professionals – from copies of questionnaires to educational resources. This section also provides a health plan pro-forma, which is directed at GPs but useful for any primary care practitioner. For each pain-related domain (eg, pain intensity or psychological factors), a number of validated questionnaires are provided. A simple click on each link provides brief information about when to use this questionnaire, as well as the actual questionnaire and scoring information. There is a lot of information on this site, so for those not familiar with many of these questionnaires, it may appear overwhelming and further guidance may be useful.

The main body of the site (*For Everyone*) consists of a series of seven short videos (episodes) of 10 to 15 minutes, on various aspects of pain (eg, sleep and pain, medications and pain, physical activity and pain), the latter being presented by a physiotherapist. The first video, *An Introduction to Pain*, which is presented by pain specialist Associate Professor Phillip Siddall, includes some excellent graphics that are useful to help people understand the differences between acute and chronic pain and the influence of factors such as stress, activity and sleep. The information is very clear and the use of videos is helpful. Each section is supported by an action plan, links to additional useful resources, many succinct summaries on each subject and links to videos (eg, a YouTube video on neuroplasticity). Consumers can download a health plan that may help them to prioritise their goals, identify who can help them to achieve their goals and what strategies will help to keep them on

track. The design of this planning sheet very much promotes self-determination and self-management.

The *For Youth: PainBytes* section also consists of seven episodes and is well presented with shorter videos and tutorials that are laid out in more detail than the adult section. It's a refreshing change to see this information being made available for younger people and I almost found the children's stories more engaging than the adults' ones.

The *Spinal Cord Injury Pain* section, with eight episodes, includes topics that are specific to pain following spinal cord injury, such as neuroplasticity and neuropathic pain, as well as basic information about pain covered in other sections. I found the pain, physical activity and exercise episode inspiring, particularly hearing one woman's journey back to farming, skiing and kayaking following her spinal cord injury.

On the downside, the videos, particularly in the adult section, are somewhat repetitive, both in tone and format, which may limit engagement with the material. Some are also a little long and engagement may depend on the individual's tolerance of the longer (10 to 15 minute) videos. The footage in the *For Everyone* section primarily focuses around two older people, which might be less appealing to a younger, more active or ambitious audience. Some of the videos included schematics, which were helpful and complemented the rest of the video footage. However, I think that this site could be enhanced by more creative presentation of the material, better use of graphics and less reliance on interviews and lectures alone.

With the growing number of pain websites available, one wonders whether this mass of information would be overwhelming for some people. Perhaps clearer guidelines on how to use the information, and the site being more than a series of tutorials (eg, having more action buttons) would improve the utility of the website for people and clinicians.

Nonetheless, the Agency for Clinical Innovation is to be commended for compiling such a useful resource. I hope that many people and clinicians will benefit from the information, leading to better outcomes.

Provenance: Invited. Not peer-reviewed.

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Reference

1. National Pain Strategy: Pain Management for all Australians. PainAustralia 2010. www.painaustralia.org.au.